

# **Minutes of the Horticulture Forum Meeting**

**Wednesday 17 June 2015, 10:30 am, Manor Suite, Greenmount Campus**

**Chair:** Keith Crawford (in Elaine Shaw's absence)

**Present:** Elaine Chapman, Keith Crawford, Peter Donnelly, Barbara Erwin, Kieran Hughes, Eric Long, Roy Lyttle, Robin McKee, Sam MacNeice, Patrick Taggart

**Apologies:** Ian Duff, Patricia Erwin, Thomas Gilpin, Hamilton Loney, Elaine Shaw

## **1. Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

Elaine Chapman discussed the definition of 'Amenity Horticulture' used in the Rol Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector with Gavin McQuaid. She sent him details of the scheme.

Elaine Chapman sent copies of the Review and Strategic Priorities for the Development of the Horticulture Industry Action Plan to members. Its discussion, however, was deferred because of time constraints and limited representation at the meeting. Elaine Chapman and Eric emphasized the importance of monitoring the forum's progress against the Action Plan.

## **2. The way ahead for the Horticulture Forum – secretarial support**

Elaine Chapman explained that because the forum was no longer in a formative phase, and now needed less support, it had been necessary to review its relationship with DARD. New arrangements were agreed following a meeting between Elaine Shaw, Elaine Chapman and Louise Millsopp (head of Supply Chain Development Branch).

Patrick Taggart is to replace Elaine Chapman as minute secretary. Ian Duff was to be approached by Elaine Shaw about the possibility of him taking on other secretarial roles: responding to consultations on behalf of the forum; and writing to ministers and other officials on behalf of the forum.

Elaine Chapman will continue to offer technical support to the forum, as required.

Keith and Eric thanked Elaine Chapman for her hard work on the forum's behalf and welcomed Patrick in his new role.

**Elaine Shaw to confirm whether Ian Duff is available to fulfil the role proposed for him.**

### **3. Horticulture Forum bank account**

The opening of a forum bank account has been problematic. Elaine Shaw and Tim Hunniford were to progress this.

**Elaine Shaw to report on progress.**

### **4. AOB – RHS investment plans; 2015 Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector (in ROI); NPD Toolkit (Horticulture Wales); Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable; EU membership referendum**

The Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector in ROI was discussed only briefly. Eric explained that it was hoped that the Farm Business Investment Scheme would provide equivalent funding to Northern Ireland businesses. Elaine Chapman explained that Ciaran Cunningham would be providing the AFSB Arable and Horticulture Sub-group with an update on the Whole Farm Needs Survey and the Farm Business Investment Scheme in the afternoon.

Sam opened a discussion on how the forthcoming referendum on EU membership may affect horticultural businesses in Northern Ireland. He recommended that the forum adopts a pro-EU membership stance.

Barbara suggested that before the next meeting forum members should ascertain the position of their organisations on the issue. Keith suggested that once the stances of member organisations are known, Ian Duff should be asked to draft a position paper on behalf of the forum. Elaine Chapman suggested that once the forum has agreed its position it should seek meetings with our three MEPs with a view of winning their support.

**Forum members to ascertain the position of their organisations on the question of continued EU membership before the next meeting.**

### **5. Presentation by Maureen Evans-Olsen (Technical delegate, World Skills UK)**

Maureen gave an overview of the work of the charity, Find a Future.

The charity manages: the Skills Show (held annually at the NEC, Birmingham); the Skills Show Experience (a GB-wide roadshow showcasing skills and career opportunities); and the UK's participation in the World Skills competitions.

37 skills, including landscape gardening, manufacturing and engineering, are included. Currently 41 competitors are being trained for the World Skills event

which will be held in Brazil in August 2015. Training includes psychology and nutrition, as well as technical instruction.

The UK is currently tenth in the World and fifth in Europe. After the Brazil event it is hoped that the UK's position will be better, or at least maintained.

#### **6. Date of next meeting**

7.30 pm, 14 September 2015, Portadown Rugby Club.

#### **7. Tour of the new horticulture building**

Teresa Maguire conducted a tour of the new CAFRE horticulture training building. It is comprised of: a classroom; a training area; new equipment; and toilets.